



G R A C E

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

SOLI ♦ DEO ♦ GLORIA

## GOD'S WORK IN CREATION

### Part 1

### Sermon Notes

Genesis 1

December 17, 2006

- I. **Defining and Understanding Creation Out of Nothing [Creatio Ex Nihilo]**
- II. **The Scriptural Basis of Creatio Ex Nihilo**
- III. **The Significance and Implications of Creatio Ex Nihilo**

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E.P. Siegfried, wrote, 'Belief in God the Creator of heaven and earth is the theoretical basis of all religious and theological truth, the real foundation underlying all other truths concerning God, and the objective principle whence all other truths proceed.'

### I. **Defining and Understanding Creation Out of Nothing [Creatio Ex Nihilo]**

- The doctrine of *Creation ex nihilo* 'out of nothing' establishes the fundamental distinction between God and man – He is the Creator; we are His creation.
- *Creatio ex nihilo* ['Creation out of nothing'] simply means that before Creation, there was God and God alone – not God and something else.
- It is helpful to also understand what is **not** meant by *Creatio ex nihilo*.
  - 'Nothing' is, in fact, nothing. Nothingness is not a substance; it is not energy [which is something]; it is not simply darkness [for that is *something*]; it is not matter in any form; it is not a vacuum [that, too, is *something*].
  - In the final analysis, it is impossible for the human, finite, mind to grasp fully the concept of *nothing*.

- God did not create *out of Himself*. This implies what ancient philosophies and many of the Eastern [New Age] religions [such as Hinduism] refer to as emanations. Creation through emanations means that God creates through a series of emanations out of Himself. As Robert Culver states, ‘The things we see are little pieces of God.’ Another way of understanding emanations is by imagining throwing a rock into a pond. Rings emanate from where the water hit. In a similar way, emanations are successive ‘rings’ that originate from God and ‘weaken’ the further they are removed from the source [which those holding to this view would refer to as God, or the Supreme Being]. This view of Creation leads to a pantheistic world view – a belief that everything is god.
  - Matter is not eternal. Many of the ancient pagan philosophers believed that matter was coeternal with God. This led to a belief in dualism – that there were two eternal competing forces – the Good [that is the spiritual, God] and the Evil [the physical, Matter].
  - Unlike human beings, when God chose to create, He did not simply fashion existing materials; He created out of nothing.
  - Also, God did not ‘need’ to create. He is completely self-sufficient; yet, He chose to create for His own glory.
- Even time ‘the succession of moments one after another’ is a created thing, for we, as God’s creation, are bound by it; yet, His existence is in eternity.

Carl F. Henry wrote, ‘The Bible presents a distinctive conception of time... Instead of viewing time abstractly as a problem, it regards time *as a created sphere* in which God’s redemptive plan is actualized.’

‘When we speak of God’s existence ‘before’ the creation of the world, we should not think of God as existing in an unending extension of time. Rather, God’s eternity means that he has a different kind of existence, an existence without the passage of time [a kind of existence that is impossible for us to fully imagine]. (Job 36:26; Psalm 90:2, 4; John 8:58; 2 Peter 3:8; Revelation 1:8) The fact that God created time reminds us of his lordship over it and our obligation to use it for his glory.’

Wayne Grudem

- Creation is an act of the Triune God.

‘In light [biblical] exposition we may reaffirm the historical Christian conviction that the Triune God created the universe out of nothing and that the Son and the [Holy] Spirit were the Father’s Coagents in creating the universe.’

Robert Reymond

‘God the Father was the primary agent in initiating the act of creation. But the Son and the Holy Spirit were also active. The Son is often described as the one ‘through’ whom creation came

about...The Holy Spirit was also at work in creation. He is generally pictured as completing, filling, and giving life to God's creation.'  
Millard Erickson

The Son's Work in Creation: John 1:2-3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2

The Holy Spirit's Work in Creation: Genesis 1:2; Job 26:13; 33:4; Psalm 104:30; Isaiah 40:13; 1 Corinthians 2:10

- Indeed, *Creatio Ex Nihilo* necessitates the Trinity. For, if God is only one person, then God's love is dependent upon the existence of His Creation.
  
- ❖ NOTE: Creation out of nothing also establishes why it is fundamentally improper to refer to God in the feminine (She). The reason is because, human procreation occurs 'out of' or 'through' the woman/mother. Yet, God is unique, for He does not create out Himself, like humans; but, 'out of nothing.' This also explains why New Age religions refer to 'Mother Earth'; as they do not hold to a biblical view of Creation.

## II. The Scriptural Basis of *Creatio Ex Nihilo*

### OLD TESTAMENT:

#### **Genesis 1:1-3**

'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light.'

#### **Psalm 33:6,9**

By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,  
And by the breath of His mouth all their host...  
For He spoke, and it was done;  
He commanded, and it stood fast.

#### **Psalm 90:2**

Before the mountains were born  
Or You gave birth to the earth and the world,  
Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

#### **Psalm 148:5**

Let them praise the name of the LORD,  
For He commanded and they were created.

#### **Isaiah 43:7**

Everyone who is called by My name,  
And whom I have created for My glory,  
Whom I have formed, even whom I have made.

## NEW TESTAMENT:

### **John 1:3**

All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

### **Acts 14:15**

and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, WHO MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM."

### **Romans 4:17**

(as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU") in the presence of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.

### **Ephesians 3:8-9**

To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things;

### **Colossians 1:16**

For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created through Him and for Him.

### **Hebrews 1:10-12**

And,

“YOU, LORD, IN THE BEGINNING LAID THE FOUNDATION OF  
THE EARTH,  
AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS;  
THEY WILL PERISH, BUT YOU REMAIN;  
AND THEY ALL WILL BECOME OLD LIKE A GARMENT,  
AND LIKE A MANTLE YOU WILL ROLL THEM UP;  
LIKE A GARMENT THEY WILL ALSO BE CHANGED  
BUT YOU ARE THE SAME,  
AND YOUR YEARS WILL NOT COME TO AN END.”

### **Hebrews 11:3**

By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

### **Revelations 4:11**

“Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.”

- Several New Testament passages clearly speak of the world / creation having a beginning:
  - ‘from [since, before] the foundation of the world’ (Matthew 13:34; 25:34; Luke 11:50; John 17:24; Ephesians 1:4; Hebrews 4:3; 9:26; 1 Peter 1:20; Revelation 13:8; 17:8)
  - ‘from the beginning’ (Matthew 19:4, 8; John 8:44; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 John 1:1; 2:13-14; 3:8)
  - ‘from the beginning of the world’ (Matthew 24:21)
  - ‘from the beginning of creation’ (Mark 10:6; 2 Peter 3:4)
  - ‘from the beginning of creation which God created’ (Mark 13:19)
  - ‘since the creation of the world’ (Romans 1:20)
  - ‘You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth’ (Hebrews 1:10)
  - ‘the beginning of God’s creation’ (Revelation 3:14)

‘These phrases show that creation involves the beginning of the existence of the world, so that creation involves the beginning of the existence of the world, so that there is no pre-existent matter.’

Werner Foerster, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*

### III. The Significance and Implications of *Creatio Ex Nihilo*

#### 1. God Alone is the Ultimate Reality

##### a. He is Autonomous

- Autonomous comes from *auto* and *nomos*, which means Law. God is a law unto Himself; free from any outside influences.
- God is the only *truly* free Being in existence.

##### b. He is the Moral Absolute / Standard

- God cannot sin because He is the Moral Standard, the autonomous One. Righteousness is defined as who God is and what He has done.
- God’s Law [that which establishes righteousness] is merely a direct reflection of God’s eternal, unchanging character.

##### c. He is the Uncaused Cause / the Unmoved Mover

Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225 – 1274 A.D.) proposed [after reading Aristotle] that there cannot be an infinite regress of finite causes. In other words, every finite being has a cause; and that chain of causal events cannot go back for eternity. Therefore, there must be a being that is *uncaused*. That being is God. This is often referred to as the cosmological argument for the existence of God.

- d. God is infinite; everything else [His creation] is finite – to include the spiritual creation [such as angels].

## 2. God's Creation Out of Nothing eliminates the possibility of dualism.

‘The biblical teaching on creation disallows any type of dualism. The Creator is unique: he is the only one who has brought reality into being. Thus, the idea of an inherently evil segment of creation, which takes its origin from some powerful evil being, such as the devil, is rejected. While the devil may be able to modify or corrupt the created material, he cannot truly create. Further, because God is responsible for the origin of everything, there is no neutral segment of the creation devoid of spiritual significance, no division of reality into the inherently good and the evil, or sacred and secular.’  
Millard Erickson

- ❑ Further, because of this truth, **no aspect of creation is inherently evil.** ‘...God saw that it was good...’
- ❑ A common example of modern-day dualism is the Eastern Yin and Yang.

‘The concepts of Yin and Yang originate in ancient Chinese philosophy and metaphysics, which describes two primal opposing but complementary forces found in all things in the universe.’

[www.Wikipedia.com](http://www.Wikipedia.com)



- ❑ Newton's Third Law of Motion states that ‘for every action there is an equal yet opposite reaction.’ Tragically, this is how many Christians view the spiritual battle around us. Yet, God is infinitely greater than all created things – ‘if God is for us, who can be against us?’
- ## 3. We, as God's creation, are completely dependant upon Him
- ❑ Our very existence and continued life is a direct result of God's creative will (Job 12:10; Acts 17:25, 28; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3).
  - ❑ As Job asks the question, ‘In whose hand is the life of every living thing, / And the breath of all mankind?’ Job 12:10

Werner Foerster writes, ‘Thus in becoming, being, and perishing, all creation is wholly dependent on the will of the Creator.’

**4. Since God created EVERYTHING and God always acts with purpose, all of Creation has a purpose – to Glorify Him!**

- ❑ God created with a purpose: For His Glory.
- ❑ Even the inanimate objects of God glorify Him (Psalm 19:1). ‘The heavens are telling of the glory of God; / And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.’
- ❑ Isaiah declares (Isaiah 43:7): ‘Everyone who is called by My name, And whom I have created for My glory, Whom I have formed, even whom I have made.’

**5. God’s Creation out of Nothing Reveals His Attributes**

a. Transcendence

- ❑ God is independent of His creation.

b. Holiness

- ❑ As the only autonomous Being in existence, God is morally separate from His creation.

c. Aseity

- ❑ God is the eternal self-existent [NOT self-created], self-sufficient One. He is the Great I AM – YHWH (Exodus 3:14; John 8:58).

d. Providence / Sovereignty

- ❑ Because God created ‘out of nothing’:
  - God is supremely and completely free to act upon His creation in accordance with His own autonomous will.
  - As a result, He is in complete control with respect to His creation, in accordance with His will.
  - Even our understanding of concepts, such as foreknowledge, are directly influenced by a proper understanding of biblical Creation [out of nothing].

## 6. Our Salvation is a result of Creatio Ex Nihilo

- ❑ Just as our Creation by God was wholly an act of God's will; so our salvation, as His new Creation is wholly an act of God's grace.
- ❑ We were once spiritually dead, with no life; yet, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive together with Christ (Ephesians 2:1-10).

## 7. A Biblical Understanding of Creation results in awe and Worship of the One True and Living God

- ❑ Because God is the Creator, He is worthy of worship.
- ❑ This is why God so abhors idolatry; for all idolatry is the placing of created things into the place of the Creator.

Read **Isaiah 44:9-20; 45:9; 46**

### **Romans 1:18-25:**

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

### **Revelation 4:11:**

'Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.'